

Most of us are affected by diabetes in some way. You, your parent, spouse, or child might have diabetes. Or maybe your friend or coworker does. In addition to the people who have been diagnosed with this disease, 25% of the people who have it don't even know it yet. Diabetes is pervasive; nearly 24 million children and adults in the United States have it. Diabetes is costly; it costs the country \$174 billion dollars annually, and the 20th District of Texas just under \$500 million dollars per year. We cannot afford to ignore this issue, particularly at a time when our country is facing such an economic crisis. It is time for each of us to ask what we can do. The most critical thing you can do is to take control of your own health and to encourage your families and communities to do the same. By simply exercising regularly and making healthy food choices, we can greatly reduce our risk of developing this disease which is the leading cause of kidney disease, blindness, and amputation.

It is also important to know the steps that you can take if you have or are at risk of developing diabetes. You can help prevent or delay the onset of these serious diabetes complications by finding out the following numbers, the ABCs of diabetes:

- **Average Glucose** - Most people with diabetes should get an estimated Average Glucose (eAG) or an A1C (average blood glucose) test, which measures how well they are managing their diabetes over time. It is important to keep your eAG less than 154 mg/dl or A1C less than 7%.

How often:

Every six months.

- **Blood Pressure** - People with diabetes should have a target blood pressure of less than 130/80 mmHg.

How often: At every visit.

- **Cholesterol** - LDL cholesterol, the bad kind of cholesterol, builds up and clogs arteries, leading to heart attacks and strokes. It should be below 100 mg/dl; HDL cholesterol, the healthy kind, should be above 40 mg/dl for men and 50 mg/dl for women; triglycerides should be below 150 mg/dl.

How often: At least once a year

If we all take our health into our own hands, we have a real chance at reducing the number of people who are diagnosed with diabetes each year, as well as reducing the negative effects that this disease will have on those who have already developed the disease. For more information diabetes, visit your health care provider or the American Diabetes Association at www.diabetes.org or 1-888-DIABETES (1-888-342-2382). Information from both these sources is available in English and Spanish.

